4/14/77

P.S. What is the "Walter bit"??? You said Lane had it handed to him and messed it up. What is it? Could it relate to the bit about smoke from the fence or the railway man's story?

Dear Harold,

Received your letter today.

I can't say I feel sorry for Kay. If Lane quoted her properly about her recollection about when the grass was cut in back of the rooming house, she deserved it. I hope Lane didn't quote me. He called me and told me what Kay's recollections were, and I told him she was definitely wrong. I told him there was a time lag--perhaps as long as six weeks between the time King was shot and the time Mayor Ingram and Russell X Thompson raised the question about the grass cutting.

I have a new agent in New York. He isn't a New Yorker though, but a Memphian who went there to sell my book and another book, which has nothing to do with the King murder. He placed [redacted] it with Doubleday. A reader there was very interested in reading it, although Doubleday did publish Frank's book, which is [redacted] no longer in print. He said he would have an answer in one week.

Meanwhile, my agent has obtained an advance copy of the Lane book, so he told me today. He wants to read it in New York and then he will send me his copy. My agent is reviewing it for a Canadian newspaper.

Holloman and I have not been close for several years. His office is in the same building, with a law firm, where I am currently doing some legal research and working with an attorney on a contingent fee case. I might drop up and talk to Holloman. The only thing I would be interested in finding out would be if Lane obtained an interview with Holloman by fraudulent representation.

Since I last wrote, Scripps-Howard newspapers in ~~Cleveland~~ Columbus, Ohio broke a story abouta $17 million offer to kill Dr. King by CIA-FBI in January 1968 to the Gambino family in New York. The source is Paul Buccilli, who claims he was a FBI informer, who was the go-between top FBI agents and ~~Mafia~~ Carlo Gambino, whom he met with in January 1968 at ~~[redacted]~~ a hideaway in Appalachin, N.Y. (Why do ~~Mafia~~ Mafia types always meet in Appalachin, N.Y.?) Gambino turned the offer down, according to Buccilli, as he is quoted in the S-H copyrighted story, on April 12, 1977.

What is your [redacted] analysis on the Buccilli story?

My agent in New York sent me a ~~[redacted]~~ Jack Anderson-[redacted]les Whitten story dated 4/6/77 appearing in New York Daily News. It did not appear in CA in Memphis, and CA regularly runs the Anderson column. Neither did the Tennessean, although it carries Anderson's column. I believe the Washington Star carries the syndicated column, but the Memphis library does not get the Star.

The Anderson story quotes our late friend, William Sartor, and his so-called information pertaining to a Dixie Mafia contract on King. ~~[redacted]~~ New Orleans was where it was made--between a Southern racist organization and organized crime figures. Then it mentions the memphian Frank Liberto, but does not say he is from Memphis. It relates the John McFerren story that he overheard ~~[redacted]~~ Liberto say over the telephone ~~[redacted]~~ to kill King on the balcony of the Lorraine and that his brother would pay him off in New Orleans. Then Anderson comes up with a new angle which I have never heard before. Namely, that a Birmingham, Ala.,

gunshop keeper, [redacted] pointed to a rifle, and told someone before the King murder that "this is the gun which will kill Martin Luther King." Later the witness supposedly saw the gun shop owner in the company of "Ray and Liberto."

I think we have discussed in detail the Liberto-McFerren-Baxton Byrant story. I played it [redacted] safe in my book and did not mention either Liberto or McFerren by name, but related the story. I also wrote that the FBI was informed and took a detailed statement from McFerren. I did not write that Bob Jensen personally told me the McFerren story did not check out. Jensen also [redacted] implied that he thought McFerren was psychotic because McFerren went to him in 1964 and told him he had a dream. In that dream, he could actually lead the FBI to the exact spot where the then three missing civil rights workers were buried. Jensen said he put his reputation on the line and had agents sent to the spot. They dug and no body. He then told me that he would never believe anything McFerren would tell him. This could mean that the Liberto story was never checked out by the FBI. Haven't you and others proved that the FBI did not check out any evidence of conspiracy, but operated on the assumption it was a routine murder case, opting for a lone assassin scenario?

I have held in abeyance for several years any judgment on the McFerren story. I respected Baxton [redacted] Byrant (I first knew him in Texas when he was running in the Democratic primary against Mayor Earle Cabell for Congress--1964, only a few months after the Kennedy slaying).. [redacted] Baxton believed McFerren. There are others, active in the civil rights movement, who have less confidence in McFerren. I am not at liberty to divulge their names, but in private, they joke about McFerren's tendency toward hallucinations. Also, like your friend Baird, McFerren apparently told several different stories to several different people. One weird version was that several black cadillacs with Louisiana license plates were parked in the alley in back of Liberto's wholesale produce business, with long radio antennas. McFerren supposedly walked in the back of the business to buy some produce for his store. [redacted] He walked through the back door and as he passed an office he overheard the alleged conversation between Liberto [redacted] and someone whom Liberto is instructing to kill King. McFerren, according to this version, went to hide so he could not be seen when Liberto came out of the office. While hiding in another room, he overheard two other men in an adjacent room, sending out the fake radio messages.

Of course, your penetrating logical mind can distill the absurdity of this version. If such a phone call occurred, it must have occurred several hours before the King slaying. This means McFerren must have remained hidden for several hours to have heard any fake radio message about the car chase, as such message would not have been sent out until after King was killed.

Yet, I have not fully discounted the McFerren story. Even in his paranoid mind, he might have heard something, maybe days before, etc, or even afterward. Would a black businessman gratuitously come forward and blast a wholesale merchant with whom he had business dealings with over a period of years//????? if there

(more)

~~Your friend,~~

~~Wayne~~

(MORE)

Then, in a similar version, McFerren told a writer for Saga that these two men sending the radio messages came looking for him after he went to the FBI. He said they drove up to his grocery store-service station in Boomerville and asked for gasoline. McFerren said he remembered them and especially the big black Cadillac with the long radio antennas and the Louisiana license plates. He said he got a good look at the two men and that they looked like law enforcement types, etc, etc...

McFerren has long been active in the black civil rights struggle in West Tennessee. One of my political persuasion must respect him for what he has done on the behalf of his people. But, I have been in the thick of these civil rights struggles myself, and I have long perceived an amazing capacity for exagge ation on the part of many of these civil rights leaders, as far as the foibles of white political leaders. While I have been in deep sympathy for these civil right leaders' goals for justice, I cannot close my eyes to their tendency to see everything as black or white(I do not mean that as a pun). A white politician with racist tendencies such as Henry Loeb cannot hav e any virtues in their Yet, these same leaders cannot detect the black Henry Loebs among them.

Although this is not apropos of anything, I recently went to the Memphis archives of past mayors, and checked out the personal official correspondence of Mayor Loeb. Aside from finding several memos and letters personally maligning me and my loyalty to these United States, I found a very touching letter to Coretta King after Dr. King was killed. I was checking out a tip whether Henry Loeb sent Mrs. King money after the slaying. I have a source--then well placed in the Loeb administration--saying Henry sent her a quite sizable sum. There was nothing in the archieves to substantiate my source's claim, but probably Henry prefered it that way. As a wealthy man, Loeb probably sent her the sum as a private citizen. Loeb won't return my calls and doesn't seem to be too friendly to me at We have conducted a sort of love-hate, reporter-official relationship for almost 10 years. I also hold in abeyance any judgment of whether Henry could have consciously conspired to have had King killed. In my present mood, I am inclined to believe he couldn't have. Henry is selfish, shortsighted and stupid, but I do not believe he is an evil man. Over the short haul, he can be political astute, but he is a politician without a vision. He is an ignornamus when it comes to social or economic philosophy, but he has his own puerile, immature moral philosophy and a Boy Scout type code of ethics. He is one of those charismatic politicians, who, because he lacks a social vision, fails in the long run, despite a potential capacity for leadership. If Loeb had the vision in 1968, he could have saved Memphis and the tragic polarization that ensued with his stupid policies. Ironically enough, that polarization destroyed Loeb's political future. Loeb always wanted to be Governor of Tennessee. Had he prevented the Sanitation strike in 1968 and brought the city together, he might have even risen higher in the political sphere. But to be elected Governor in Tennessee, a Memphian must be able to carry Big Shelby clunty by a wide margin to offset the East Tennessee vote. The fragmentation, of course, would not only prevent Henry from carrying Shelby by a big vote, but also would deprive Henry of the big black vote in West Tennessee, Nashville and Chattanooga.

Your friend
Wayne